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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Korea Institute of Brain Science, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

Empowering women through brain education

In an event entitled "Empowering Women through Brain Education", organized by the Korea Institute of Brain Science, on 11 March 2010 at the Church Center for the United Nations, discussions centred on the role of brain education and empowerment of women, in preparation for the 2010 annual ministerial review on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women. The meeting drew broad participation from academics, non-governmental organizations, clinicians and parliamentarians. It provided innovative ideas on how brain education can provide a platform for advancing changes in attitudes towards women and their empowerment. In their analysis, participants recognized that, despite some progress, many obstacles remain, limiting the empowerment of women. From an early age, religion, culture and education have a strong influence on how women and men see their roles in society.

Women's and men's personal attitudes and beliefs are critical in effecting change. Religion and tradition play an influential part in how men and women see their roles and how they integrate change into their lives. New patterns of thinking, believing and acting need to build on existing modes of thought and behaviour. Brain education can, in this regard, play an important role.

There was general recognition that promoting gender equality and empowering women (Goal 3) will contribute to achieving all the other Millennium Development Goals, from reducing poverty and hunger to saving children's lives, improving maternal health, ensuring universal education, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Case studies and personal experiences of participants enriched the discussions on the value of brain education in changing deep-rooted cultural preconceptions that limit the individual's power to make progressive changes. The essential five steps of brain education were demonstrated as a means to help women take action and create meaningful lives. Improvements in education and understanding brain function were one dimension, but several speakers focused on the legal and political side of the equation to support growth and eliminate the abuse and suffering of women. Constitutional and political changes are needed in many countries to open the door for more widespread participation by women. Continued support of the international community was recognized as particularly important. Several outreach projects were presented, including global initiatives such as Brain Education Online, the Earth Citizen Movement and brain tests online.

Recommendations of the meeting included:

- Promoting brain education as an effective tool to change deep-rooted cultural preconceptions that limit the individual's power to make progressive changes
- Mobilize the international community to focus on improving the status of women and gender equality in some of the poorest countries

In summary, there was general agreement on the fundamental necessity of working together at the community and individual levels. Global change will happen when we use our brains to our fullest potential through education about the brain and taking action to realize our personal visions.